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(54) A skill-testing electronic games machine

(57) A skill-testing electronic games machine (2) is constructed and adapted to be played by a player (4) only after a purchase has been made of a product or a service. The machine (2) may comprise token-operated start means (6), skill-testing means (8), and payout means (10) for paying out a prize-stating declaration for players who win. The prize-stating declaration may be a voucher.

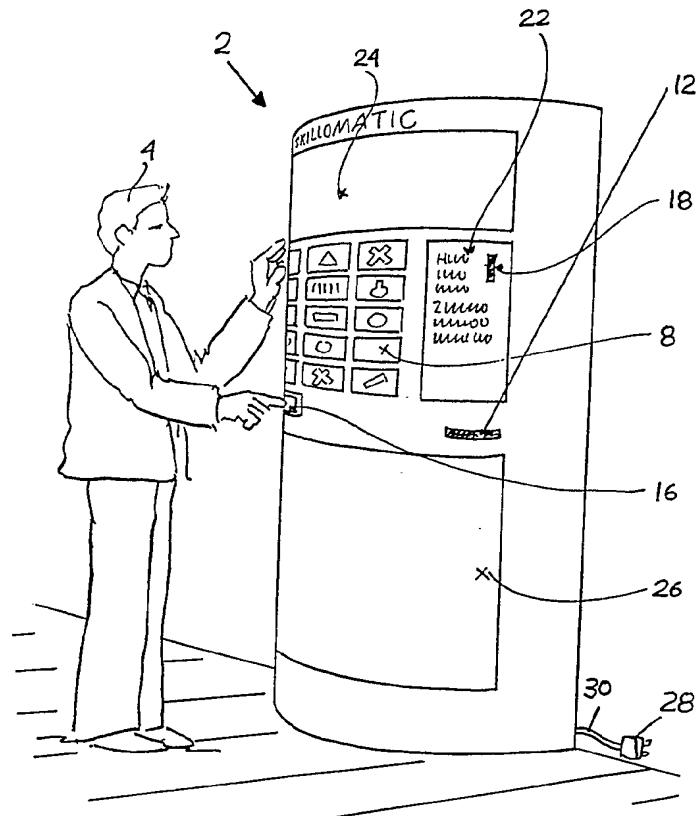


FIG 1

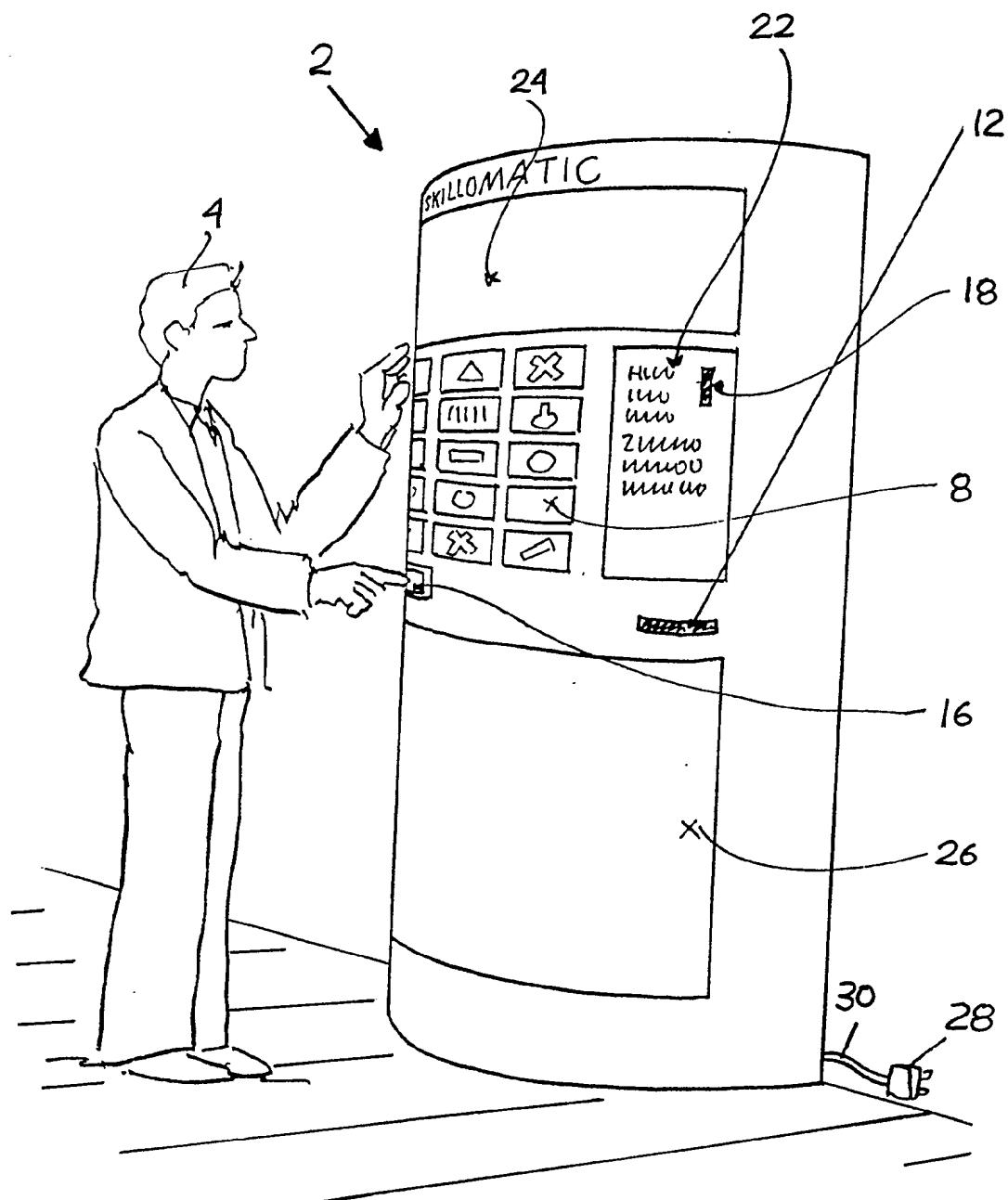
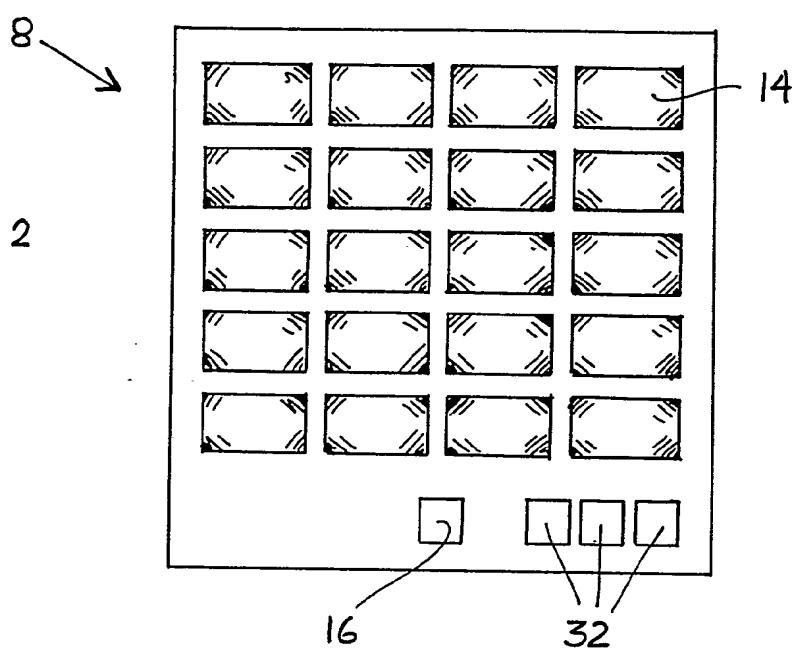
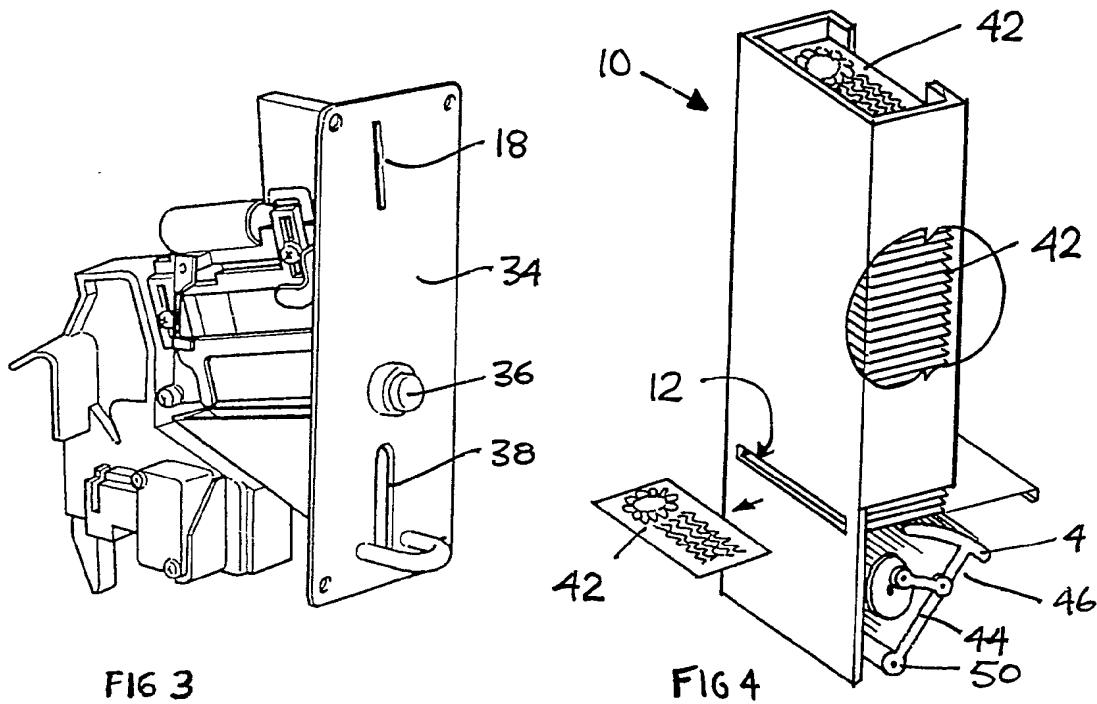


FIG 1

FIG 2



2/2



A SKILL-TESTING ELECTRONIC GAMES MACHINE

This invention relates to a skill-testing electronic games machine.

5 Skill-testing electronics games machines such for example as those machines known as fruit machines are well known. The known machines are however not designed exclusively to meet the needs of the sales promotion industry and it is an aim of the present invention to satisfy these needs.

10 Accordingly, in one non-limiting embodiment of the invention, there is provided a skill-testing electronic games machine constructed and adapted to be played by a player only after a purchase has been made of a product or a service.

15 The purchase will usually be made by the player but a purchase may be made by a friend or colleague of the player if desired. By arranging that the machine can only be played after a purchase has been made, the machine is able to be used within the law which currently forbids the use of a lottery to determine winners/losers if the only
20 method of entry to a promotion is via a purchase. Thus with the machine of the present invention, companies seeking to promote their products or services can legally offer customers an instant win, skill-based game in return for making a purchase. If the desire to play the machine and

the potential prizes are attractive enough, then the public can be encouraged to purchase a particular product or service.

Preferably, the machine of the present invention comprises token-operated start means for setting the machine in a play mode, skill-testing means, and payout means for paying out a prize-stating declaration for players who win. The prize-stating declaration can then be taken to an appropriate member of staff at premises at which the machine is installed and the prize-stating declaration can then be exchanged for the prize stated on the declaration. In this way, staff do not have to supervise the operation of the machine in order to determine who has won or lost.

The prize-stating declaration may be in the form of a voucher which may be made of paper or card. Other types of prize-stating declaration, including plastics members may be employed if desired.

The skill-testing means may comprise a display panel for hosting a skill-testing display.

The machine may be one in which the display panel comprises an array of areas which are adapted to be illuminated by a moving light, some of the areas being win areas and some of the areas being lose areas, and the machine also being one in which the machine includes a stop device for stopping the moving light on one of the areas. The stop device will thus be used such that players

endeavour to stop the moving light on win areas rather than lose areas. The stop device may be a stop button or any other suitable and appropriate member.

The array of areas may be arranged in columns, 5 for example four columns.

Advantageously, the areas are arranged to be illuminated faster as a player progresses across the array of areas.

The machine may include sound effect means for 10 giving sound effects. The sound effects may increase in speed and/or intensity as the movement of the light increases. The sound effects may be created by a buzzer or any other suitable and appropriate audible device.

The payout means may be a dispenser device for 15 dispensing a prize-stating declaration from the machine. The prize-stating declaration may thus issue from an appropriate slot in the machine, or it may issue into a collection recess.

The machine of the present invention is advantageous 20 in that it does not require complex electronics and it can be produced with many standard components already used on known games machines.

Advantageously, the machine of the present invention includes skill-level adjusting means.

Preferably, the skill-level adjusting means is not available to the player. The skill-level adjusting means is preferably only available to an installer and/or staff in the premises of installation. The skill-level adjusting means can then be altered on installation or after a predetermined period of installation so that all customers play the machine at the same level of skill.

The skill-level adjusting means may be simple buttons. Other devices may be employed if desired.

Preferably, the machine of the present invention is a free-standing machine since this facilitates installation for a promotional period and removal of the machine at the end of the promotional period. Also, by being free standing, the machine is easier to locate at appropriate positions in different premises.

An embodiment of the invention will now be described solely by way of example and with reference to the accompanying drawings in which:

Figure 1 shows a skill-testing electronics games machine being used;

Figure 2 shows skill-testing means used in the machine shown in Figure 1;

Figure 3 shows the token-operated start means used in the machine shown in Figure 1; and

Figure 4 shows the payout means used in the machine shown in Figure 1.

Referring to the drawings, there is shown a skill-testing electronic games machine 2 which is 5 constructed and adapted to be played by a player 4 only after a purchase has been made of a product or a service. The machine 2 comprises token-operated start means 6 (see Figure 3), skill-testing means 8 (see Figure 2) and payout means 10 (see Figure 4) for paying out a prize-stating 10 declaration for players who win. The prize-stating declaration is in the form of a voucher (not shown) which is dispensed through a dispensing slot 12 in the machine 2.

As can be seen from Figures 1 and 2, the skill-testing means 8 comprises four rows of five areas 14 which 15 are adapted to be illuminated by a moving light. The areas 14 shown in Figure 2 are blank for simplicity of illustration whereas the areas 14 shown in Figure 1 have been shown as provided with various symbols. Some of the areas 14 are win areas and some of the areas 14 are lose areas. The 20 machine 2 includes a stop device in the form of a stop button 16. The stop button 16 is depressed when the player 4 thinks that it is possible stop the light on a win area 14 rather than a lose area 14. The various symbols shown in Figure 1 for the areas 14 can be provided on a clear

plastics sheet which is arranged to cover the areas 14 as shown in Figure 2.

The machine 2 as shown in Figure 1 includes a slot 18 for receiving a token, for example a token of the type currently used in known fruit machines. This token can be obtained after a purchase has been made of a product or a service, and the token is effective to set the machine 2 in a play mode. A display panel 20 can be provided having instructions 22 on how to play the machine 2.

The machine 2 may have a display area 24 for displaying any suitable and appropriate promotional material.

The machine 2 may also have an area 26 which can be illuminated and which can be adapted to receive a point of sale display such for example as a poster.

The machine 2 is electrically operated via a simply three pin plug 28 and a lead 30. Thus the machine 2 can be operated simply by being plugged into an appropriate mains outlet socket (not shown).

As can be seen from Figure 2, the machine 2 is provided with skill-level adjusting means in the form of skill buttons 32. These skill buttons 32 are not available to the player and they are usually only available to the installer, but they may also be available to staff at the premises of installation of the machine 2. Each skill

button 32 determines which software program drives the pattern and speed of the flashing lights which illuminate the areas 14. Each skill button 32 also determines which software program controls appropriate sound effects which are also provided by the machine 2. Usually, one program will be selected before the machine 2 is delivered to the outlet and this level of skill will remain fixed until a particular promotional run of the machine is finished.

The start means 6 shown in Figure 3 comprises a plate member 34 which contains the slot 18. The plate member 34 may also contain a token return button 36 and a token return slot 38 for receiving returned tokens. The plate member 34 supports the illustrated start mechanism.

The payout means 10 shown in Figure 4 comprises a housing 40 which contains the dispensing slot 12 and this dispensing slot 12 as shown in Figure 4 is shown dispensing a prize-stating declaration in the form of a voucher 42. As can be seen from Figure 4, the housing 40 contains a stack of the vouchers 42. The vouchers 42 are dispensed by the dispensing mechanism 44. This dispensing mechanism 44 includes an arm 46 which has a head member 48 for forcing the lowermost voucher 42 through the dispensing slot 42 on pivoting of the arm 46 about a pivot 50.

The machine 2 may be installed through any desired promotional outlet premises such for example as

5 public houses, fast food chain stores, supermarkets and garages. The machine may be used such that after a specified purchase or service, the player 4 receives a token from a member of staff at the premises. Alternatively, the token may be affixed to the product purchased.

10 The token is inserted into the machine 2 via the slot 18. This sets the machine 2 into its play mode. Depending upon the skill level at which the machine 2 is set, the player 4 is given a fixed number of seconds to press the stop button 16, when the moving light illuminates one of four winning areas 14. The areas 14 are shown in the drawings as winning squares. Other shapes may however be employed for the winning areas.

15 As the player 4 moves across the illustrated four columns of play areas 14, the light moves faster and sound effects created by a buzzer unit within the machine 2 speed up. If the player 4 depresses the stop button when one of the four winning areas 14 is not illuminated, then the game ends. If the player illuminates all four winning areas 14 within the given time period, then the dispensing mechanism 44 is triggered and a voucher 42 is dispensed through the dispensing slot 12. The voucher 42 will state the prize won.

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25 Because the machine 2 is free standing, it can easily be installed where desired to offer customers the opportunity to play and win instantly. The machine 2 is

designed to provide a simple, challenging and compulsive electronic game, but one which can only be played providing the customers have met a purchase stipulation of the promotor's choice. The promotor is able to control the 5 type of prizes offered and also to control the win ratio via the skill buttons 32. By way of example, it is mentioned that one skill level may give a player twenty seconds (which may tick away audibly) in which to depress the stop button 16 four times to stop the moving light on the above mentioned 10 four winning areas 14.

The machine 2 operates such that it is substantially self contained so that staff are not required to switch on the machine 2 every time a player 4 wishes to play. Also, the staff are not required to be involved 15 in supervising the actual playing of the machine 2, nor in verifying winners. All the staff are required to do is to pay out what is stated on the voucher 42.

Advantageously, the above mentioned plastics skin which covers the areas 14 can be arranged to be easily 20 interchangeable so that this skin can easily be produced in each individual promotor's graphics. Players can be required to stop the lights behind an illustration of the promotor's product or service.

The machines 2 can be provided on a hire 25 basis, for example for a promotion week or a longer or shorter promotional period. Playing tokens and vouchers 46 can be provided in sealed packs as may be desired.

At the end of a promotional period, the machine 2 can be collected simply and easily.

It is to be appreciated that the embodiment of the invention described above has been given by way of example only and that modifications may be effected. Thus, for example, the machine 2 can be of other shapes and sizes. Also, if desired, the machine 2 can be arranged to give free games, for example to build up the number of people in a store at any one time. The machine 2 can be played by persons of all ages.

If desired, the prize-stating declaration need not be processed by a member of staff at the promotional premises where the machine is installed, but may instead be required to be mailed-in to claim a prize, or may be a competition entry to be mailed-in, or may be a discount voucher for use in the premises of another company. Also, if desired, the machine may in some circumstances be played without the purchase of a product or a service, for example, if a promoter should decide to give out play tokens for free, for example to encourage people to visit premises.

If desired, the skill-testing electronic games machine of the present invention may be provided with a self-monitoring device which, on every other occasion

the machine is played, calculates the average win ratio to-date, compares the figure with the win ratio programmed into the machine when installed, and if necessary, alters the speed at which the light moves to make the game easier, 5 or more difficult, as required to ensure the win ratio overall matches that initially set into the machine. The self-monitoring device may operate on any desired occasion to ensure the win ratio overall matches that initially set into the machine. The machine of the present invention 10 may be produced in three sections which are independent of each other and which are fastenable together, for example such that they clip together. The machine may have instant-win, pre-printed prize vouchers which are dispensed automatically.

15 The machine may be sold under the trade mark SKILLOMATIC.

CLAIMS

1. A skill-testing electronic games machine constructed and adapted to be played by a player only after a purchase has been made of a product or a service.
2. A skill-testing electronic games machine according to claim 1 and comprising token-operated start means for setting the machine in a play mode, skill-testing means, and payout means for playing out a prize-stating declaration for players who win.
3. A skill-testing electronic games machine according to claim 2 in which the skill-testing means comprises a display panel for hosting a skill-testing display.
4. A skill-testing electronic games machine according to claim 3 in which the display panel comprises an array of areas which are adapted to be illuminated by a moving light, some of the areas being win areas and some of the areas being lose areas, and the machine also being one in which the machine includes a stop device for stopping the moving light on one of the areas.
5. A skill-testing electronic games machine according to claim 4 in which the stop device is a stop button.

6. A skill-testing electronic games machine according to claim 4 or claim 5 in which the array of areas is arranged in columns.
7. A skill-testing electronic games machine according to any one of claims 4 to 6 in which the areas are arranged to be illuminated faster as a player progresses across the array of areas.
8. A skill-testing electronic games machine according to any one of claims 2 to 7 and including sound effect means for giving sound effects.
9. A skill-testing electronic games machine according to any one of claims 2 to 8 in which the payout means is a dispenser device for dispensing a prize-stating declaration from the machine.
10. A skill-testing electronic games machine according to any one of the preceding claims and including skill-level adjusting means.
11. A skill-testing electronic games machine according to claim 10 in which the skill-level adjusting means is arranged to be not available to the player.

12. A skill-testing electronic games machine substantially as herein described with reference to the accompanying drawings.

Patents Act 1977

Examiner's report to the Comptroller under
Section 17 (The Search Report)

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Relevant Technical fields

(i) UK CI (Edition K) A6H (H17), G4V (VAA)

5 G07F 17/00, 17/32, 17/38

(ii) Int CI (Edition)

Search Examiner

A T BLUNT

Databases (see over)

(i) UK Patent Office

(ii)

Date of Search

29 SEPTEMBER 1992

Documents considered relevant following a search in respect of claims

1 TO 12

Category (see over)	Identity of document and relevant passages	Relevant to claim(s)
X	GB 2207268 A (COINMASTER)	1-14
X	GB 2195292 (ULTIMATE SWIVEL)	1-14
X	US 4869500 (WILLIAMS)	1-14
X	US 4854590 (JOLLIFF)	1-14
X	US 4671512 (BACHMAN)	1-14

Category	Identity of document and relevant passages	Relevance to claim(s)

Categories of documents

- X:** Document indicating lack of novelty or of inventive step.
- Y:** Document indicating lack of inventive step if combined with one or more other documents of the same category.
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- P:** Document published on or after the declared priority date but before the filing date of the present application.
- E:** Patent document published on or after, but with priority date earlier than, the filing date of the present application.
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